



# Island Park Public Library

## LIPA DIRECT ASSESSMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

**Question:** **Why is the Library raising taxes?**

**Answer:** The Island Park Public Library has been placed in the unfortunate position of considering a significant tax increase to its budget, which would impact taxpayers through our school district-collected tax levy. The Island Park School District is withholding the Library's proportional share of the Direct Assessment payments under the LIPA settlement, and this is a major factor in this possible budget increase.

The Library received its proportional share of LIPA revenue for decades. The LIPA Direct Assessment monies now being withheld from the Library could have been used to offset necessary increases to the Library's budget stemming largely from maintenance and repairs of the School District-owned building, increased operating costs, and other expenses. Without these LIPA Direct Assessment monies, the Library has no option but to consider significantly increasing its tax levy to maintain services and programs.

**Question:** **What has the Library done to try to obtain an equitable portion of the LIPA Direct Assessment settlement for Library patrons?**

**Answer:** Library officials have consistently warned about the impact of the settlement – from Library Director Jessica Koenig's op-ed in *Newsday* almost two years ago to seeking a fair and equitable distribution of monies from the School District under the LIPA settlement.

The Library and its administration have also interacted with our state and county elected officials of both parties, including those who have represented us during their terms, in addition to making our voices heard at County legislative hearings through testimony and public comment. The Library and its Board have loudly spoken out about this inequitable situation.

The Library has also corresponded with the School District but has been rebuffed for an in-person Board-to-Board discussion.

**Question:** **How much will the Library's tax liability increase per household?**

**Answer:** The Library Board and its administration are currently developing a proposed budget for 2024-2025 that addresses the unfortunate reality we are currently facing. While we are making every effort to minimize the financial impact on homeowners, the final 2024-2025 budget and resulting tax increase will likely be above the state property tax cap. Once the Library Board finalizes the proposed budget, we will be better enabled to quantify the approximate annual fiscal impact of an increase to taxpayers.

**Question:** **Is there a giant hole in the Library's budget right now?**

**Answer:** No, there is not. Last spring the Library Board and its administration took steps to formulate a budget under the assumption of the worst-case scenario – that the Library would not be receiving its proportional share of the Direct Assessment monies under the LIPA Settlement.

The Library Board did not want to risk a third of this year's Library budget being unreceived due to the withholding of the Direct Assessment monies by the School District – that's prudent fiscal management in the face of actual realities.

**Question:** **Has the Library told/informed the School District about problems with the Library building/facility?**

**Answer:** Yes. As you may know, the Library's building is owned by the School District. However, the Library has been paying for repairs to the structure and facility.

The School District is aware of these challenges concerning their building and the School District's architect visited the Library to evaluate the condition of the building a year ago. The Library administration has even reported the issues in writing to the School District. However, the Library has not heard back from the School District concerning these items.

The Library does not currently have sufficient monies to pay for these expenses. Unless the School District funds these repairs, the Library will need to significantly increase its levy and perhaps seek bonding to complete the necessary work.

**Question:** **Did Nassau County do something wrong? / Did the Library make a mistake?**

**Answer:** Nassau County has opined that the Island Park Library is entitled to its proportional share of the Direct Assessment monies under the LIPA settlement. The County also sent a chart to the Town of Hempstead which confirms the amount of monies the Library should be provided by the School District for this year.

However, under New York State law, as a school district library, those monies must first go to the School District and then be transmitted to the Library. The School District is presently withholding those monies.

**Question:** **We've heard it is illegal for the School District to provide the Library with its proportional share – that it would be an “impermissible gift of public funds.” Is that true?**

**Answer:** While the New York State Constitution prohibits the illegal gift of public funds, or giving public monies for **private** purposes or benefits, the Library is a **public** entity. As a school district public library we are **NOT** “private” in any way, shape, or form.

Receiving our reasonable and customary proportion from the School District, as we should, ensures that those funds are put to the benefit of the entire community – our shared tax base with the School District – through the operation of the Library.

**Question:** **How much money is the Library supposed to get from the School District?**

**Answer:** The proportional share the Library has received for decades is 4.2% of what the School District receives from LIPA monies.

The County has indicated that the Library should have received approximately \$537,000 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year from Direct Assessment monies under the LIPA settlement. Since the settlement is a multi-year agreement, the amount of monies owed to the Library will compound in the future.

**Question:** **Has the Library Board met with the School Board on this issue?**

**Answer:** No. Although the Library would welcome the conversation and has requested a meeting with the School Board, to date, the Island Park School Board has declined to meet with the Library to discuss this important community issue.